

PARKING

INTRODUCTION

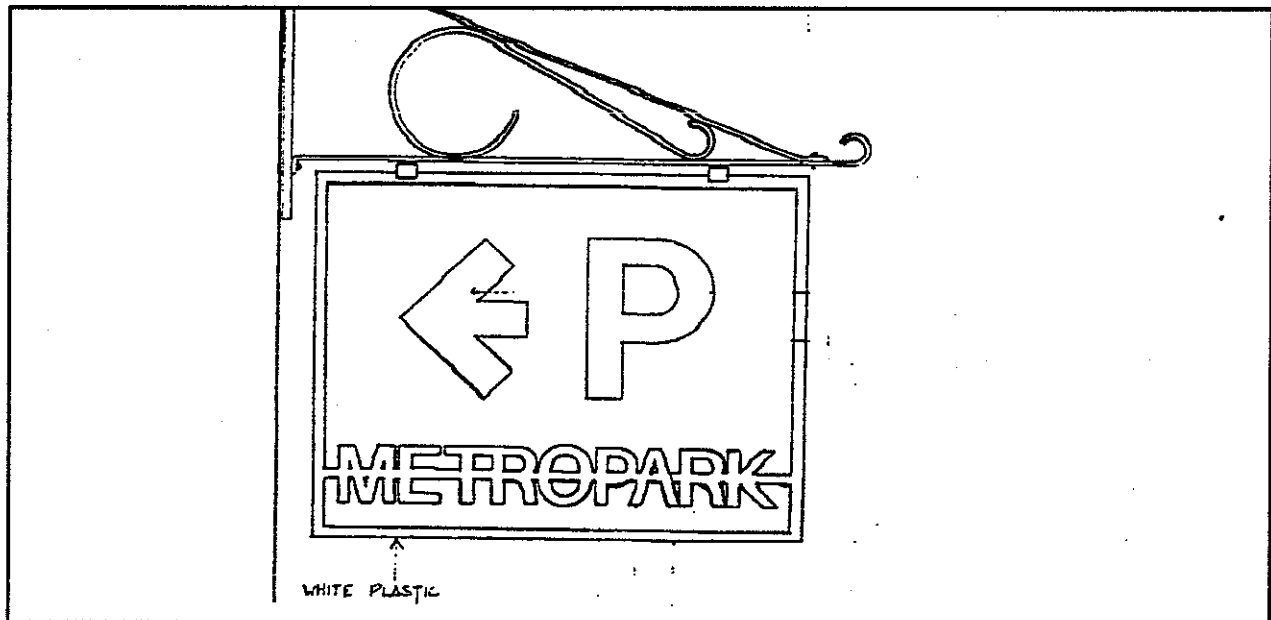
Structures and areas to accommodate transportation needs have been an element of the man-made environment of Alexandria since the 18th century. While the mode of transit has changed during the last two centuries, the need for structural accommodation has not. Horses and wagons required livery stables and barns. The railroad required stations and switching yards. At one time, Alexandria had four railroad stations now consolidated into a single union station. The motorized vehicle has to be parked and serviced.

Automobiles, buses and trucks and their attendant requirements are perhaps the single biggest visual change in the historic districts in the 20th century. Parking lots and garages are subject to review and approval of a certificate of appropriateness by the Boards of Architectural Review. For parking lots, the Boards review those elements of the parking lot operation which are above grade, for example, signs, lighting, bumper guards,

attendant booths, walls and fences as well as the appropriateness of at-grade paving material. The design of parking garages must be approved by the Boards.

REQUIREMENTS

- Privately owned commercial parking lots and garages are not permitted in residential zones. (Zoning Ordinance)
- All non-required parking lots and garages require approval of a Special Use Permit (SUP) by City Council. The application for a Special Use Permit may be obtained from the Department of Planning and Community Development.
- Parking lots and garages with more than five spaces require the approval of a Site Plan by the Planning Commission. The application for a Site Plan may be obtained from the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services. It is the policy of the Planning Commission to hear the SUP and Site Plan applications in conjunction with one another.



Illuminated hanging sign for a parking garage.

SOURCE: 115 South Union Street, BAR Case #89-149, Service Neon Signs, Inc.

- A plat of the property is required for approval of a SUP or Site Plan.
- Parking lots and garages require illumination. The lighting requirements may be obtained from the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services and the Police Department.
- Parking lots must be screened to provide a buffer between the lot and the street right-of-way.
- Vision clearance
There is a general City requirement that buildings on corner lots must maintain a vision clearance at the corner for purposes of transportation safety. In such instances, structures may be no higher than 42" (3' 6") above the curb. There is also a general policy to maintain the building line in the historic districts. Therefore, the Zoning Ordinance gives the Boards the power to waive this requirement as well as other yard requirements where it determines that the maintenance of the building line is important to the blockface.
- Tree removal for parking lots or garages requires approval of the City Arborist. Additionally, vegetative screening for parking lots or garages requires approval of the City Arborist.
- New construction must include parking. The requirements vary depending upon the size of the building. Generally, in commercial zones, parking must be included for specific projects on land exceeding 10,000 square feet. For residential projects, parking is required for both single and multi-family construction.
- Parking lots and garages must meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Parking garages and lots which involve land disturbance of 2,500 square feet or more must comply with the requirements of the Chesapeake Bay Protection Ordinance. Information on this requirement may be obtained from the City Engineer. (Telephone: 703/838-4328)

- Parking lots and garages which require the approval of a Site Plan must comply with the provisions of the Alexandria Archaeological Protection Code (§ 11-411 of the Zoning Ordinance). The specific requirements may be obtained from the City Archaeologist, Alexandria Archaeology, 105 North Union Street, 3rd Floor. (Telephone: 703/838-4399).

GUIDELINES

- Parking garages must meet the guidelines for New Construction, Chapter 6.
- It is the policy of the Boards not to consider applications for certificates of appropriateness until other necessary city approvals have been received including zoning variances, special use permits, encroachments, vacation of land and compliance with the Alexandria Archaeological Protection Code.
- Parking lots should be screened and landscaped so that they do not create a visual disruption of the streetscape while being consistent with safety requirements. Brick fences are appropriate for visual screening of surface parking lots.
- Lighting levels of parking lots after dark should not be excessive while being consistent with safety requirements.
- The above grade elements of a parking garage or lot such as fences, walls, gates, lighting, signage, bollards and chains should not detract from the architectural character of the surrounding buildings and should be consistent with the individual sections of these guidelines. In particular, it should be noted that portable or moveable signs are not permitted under the Zoning Ordinance.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

In order to properly evaluate the appropriateness of the design of a proposed parking lot or garage, the Boards of Architectural Review require that an accurate depiction of the design be presented. Designs for park-

ing lots and garages presented to the Boards of Architectural Review must be prepared by a professional engineer or architect.

All applications for approval of parking lots and garages must contain the following information:

Alexandria Business License

Proof of a valid Alexandria Business License is required at the time of application for contractors, subcontractors, architects, and designers.

Photograph of Existing Conditions

Clear photographs of the site and surrounding properties are required for reference.

Plot Plan/Site Plan

A plot or site plan accurately showing the location and dimensions of the parking lot or garage including property lines, accessory structures, fences and gradelines is required.

Drawings

Drawings accurately representing all elevations of changes to the proposed structure indicating materials and overall dimensions, including height, are required. In addition, a drawing showing the contextual relationship of the proposed structure to existing adjacent buildings is required. The location of such ancillary items as HVAC units, heat pumps, roof guards, fire hose connections, utility meters and risers should be noted on the drawings. The drawings should have a minimum scale of $3/32" = 1'$, however, larger scale drawings may be required. At least one set must meet the maximum permit size of 24" x 36". Additional copies of the required drawings may be reduced if they are clearly legible.

Floor Area Ratio Calculations

Applicants must provide accurate F.A.R. calculations for the construction of parking garages.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The construction of parking lots or garages may affect archaeological resources. With its rich history, the City of Alexandria is particularly concerned about its archaeological heritage. Archaeological resources in the historic districts are great in number and highly diverse in materials. They often consist of ceramic and glass fragments in the backyards of historic properties; however, archaeological resources are also brick-lined shafts in yards and basements; brick kilns; foundations, footings, postholes and builders trenches of non-extant buildings; landscape features such as walkways and gardens; and even American Indian artifacts which pre-date colonial Alexandria. Often these clues to the City's past appear to be unimportant debris, yet when the artifacts and building remains are excavated and recorded systematically, they provide the only knowledge of lost Alexandria.

Every application to the B.A.R. which potentially involves ground disturbance is reviewed by City archaeologists to determine whether significant archaeological resources may still survive on the property. Therefore, the potential for additional requirements to protect archaeological resources exists with any project that involves ground disturbing activities.

The applicant can speed along the archaeological review process by requesting a Preliminary Archaeological Assessment from Alexandria Archaeology at the earliest date.

Call (703) 838-4399, Tuesday through Saturday. Alexandria Archaeology is located on the third floor of the Torpedo Factory Art Center.

• RESIDENTIAL ZONES

In residential zones, the application for construction of parking lots and garages is reviewed by City archaeologists. In most cases, the applicant is required to notify Alexandria Archaeology before ground disturbance, so that a City archaeologist may monitor this work and record significant finds. However, when a property has a high potential for containing significant archaeological resources, a City archaeologist may request permission to excavate test samples in the affected area before the project begins.

• COMMERCIAL ZONES

In commercial zones the ground disturbing activities associated with the construction of parking lots and garages may necessitate compliance with the Alexandria Archaeological Protection Procedure designated pursuant to the Code of Alexandria, § 5-5-9, sub-§ (7.1), § 5-5-4 and § 5-5-9, sub-§ 1 as enacted on November 18, 1989. The specific requirements may be obtained from the City Archaeologist.

Occasionally, compliance in commercial projects may require the property owner to contract with an independent archaeologist to document conditions before and during construction. Property owners should contact the City Archaeologist as early as possible so that this does not delay the project.

Materials

The materials to be used for the parking structure must be specified and delineated on the drawings. Actual samples may be provided, if appropriate.

Color

The proposed color of the structure must be indicated and an actual color sample provided.

DRIVEWAYS, SIDEWALKS AND PAVING

Paving materials for garden yard areas, driveways and sidewalks (whether public or private) are important elements in the overall visual composition of the historic districts. Care should be taken in selecting materials that are appropriate and compatible with the prevailing use of paving materials on the blockface.

The Zoning Ordinance permits the Boards to review at-grade materials, however, except as provided below, they generally do not review or approve alterations or projects that are not above grade except in conjunction with a construction project otherwise subject to review. The Boards have become increasingly concerned about inappropriate and excessive paving of open space within the historic districts and inappropriate at-grade materials which detract from the historic character of the districts. Therefore, the Boards have adopted the policy that they will review all hard surface paving materials in excess of 150 square feet which are or may be used for parking on private property. For example, the Boards consider placing asphalt over brick pavers to be inappropriate.

The Boards have also gone on record as fully supporting the on-going work of the City to use historically appropriate paving materials such as brick for sidewalks throughout the historic districts. The Boards have also expressed concern on a number of occasions that historic street and paving elements such as cobblestones and granite and slate curbstones should be preserved and remain *in situ*.

CURB CUTS

In many sections of the historic districts, individual driveways in the front of residential properties are not desirable because the automobiles parked in the front yards create a visual intrusion and disrupt the scale, rhythm and unity of the architecture. Any new or enlarged driveway in the historic districts requires the approval of a curb cut by the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services. However, because of the severe parking problem in the Old and Historic Alexandria District, there is a ban on the creation of new curb cuts if an on-street parking space is to be removed. No such ban exists in the Parker-Gray District.

The creation of a driveway or parking area usually involves the erection of a gate and wall or fence to delineate the parking area or driveway. These above-grade structures do require the review and approval of a certificate of appropriateness by the Boards of Architectural Review and must comply with the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance (See § 7-202(A)&(B)). On corner lots, the wall, fence or gate must also comply with the vision clearance setback (42") of the Zoning Ordinance. This requirement may be waived by the Boards of Architectural Review upon application.

RELATED SECTIONS

Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities
Lighting
Signs
Street Furniture
Walls, Fences and Gates

NOTE: Illustrations are provided for information only. Applications for certificates of appropriateness are reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis.

ADOPTED BY THE BOARDS OF
ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW, 5/25/93